

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, PN  
SUBJECT: PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATOR ON DECONCINI

SUMMARY: IN AN "OFF-THE-RECORD" MEDIA BRIEFING, GOP  
NEGOTIATOR CARLOS LOPEZ-GUEVARA CALLED DECONCINI RESERVATION  
A "NAKED AND BARE FACED PRESENTATION" WHICH WAS "MORE  
OFFENSIVE" THAN, BUT DID NOT DETRACT FROM, ARTICLE  
IV OF NEUTRALITY TREATY. INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE REQUIRED  
NEGOTIATION ON RESERVATIONS PRIOR TO RATIFICATION OF  
TREATIES, AND HE FELT PANAMANIAN REAFFIRMATION OF NONINTER-  
VENTION PRINCIPLE AT THAT TIME WOULD PREVAIL OVER  
DECONCINI. BRIEFING RECEIVED ONLY MINIMAL LOCAL MEDIA  
COVERAGE. IN OUR VIEW, IT CONFIRMS THAT THE GOP IS STILL  
CONSIDERING THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO IT ON DECONCINI  
AND THAT NO DECISION HAS YET BEEN MADE. END SUMMARY.

1. GOP NATIONAL INFORMATION COMMISSION HELD  
A SECOND MEDIA BRIEFING ON MARCH 30. ABOUT TEN LOCAL  
MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES HEARD NEGOTIATOR CARLOS LOPEZ-  
GUEVARA DISCUSS SENATE RESERVATIONS AND UNDERSTANDING  
TO NEUTRALITY TREATY. FOREIGN PRESS WAS NOT INVITED.  
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2. LOPEZ CALLED WORDS LIKE RESERVATION, CONDITION OR  
UNDERSTANDING "TERMS USED BY THE SENATE IN ITS INTERNAL  
RELATIONS WITH THE US PRESIDENCY". TWO PARTIES TO A  
TREATY WERE BOUND BY NOTES EXCHANGED AT TIME OF RATIFI-  
CATION, HE SAID, AND THESE NOTES, INCLUDING RESERVATIONS,

MUST BE NEGOTIATED PRIOR TO EXCHANGE. PUBLICATION OF SENATE TEXTS BY FOREIGN MINISTRY OPENED WHAT LOPEZ TERMED "A FULL RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES REGARDING A NATIONAL CONSENSUS; ... IF THE AMENDMENTS AND RESERVATIONS... INVOLVE SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES TO THE TREATIES APPROVED BY THE PANAMANIAN PEOPLE, THEN... ANOTHER PLEBISCITE WOULD HAVE TO BE HELD."

3. HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT GOP HAD ADOPTED NO FORMAL POSITION ON SENATE ACTIONS, AND CALLED A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT PRIOR TO ACTION ON SECOND TREATY "UNNECESSARY". BUT HE GAVE HIS "PERSONAL OPINIONS" ON THREE MAJOR POINTS. LEADERSHIP AMENDMENTS WERE ONLY AN "EXPANSION" OF TORRIJOS-CARTER MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. NUNN RESERVATION DID NOT CONTRADICT TREATY SINCE IT SIMPLY RECOGNIZED PANAMA'S RIGHT TO NEGOTIATE WITH US ON MILITARY BASES OR ANY OTHER SUBJECT IN FUTURE. AND HIS "VERY PERSONAL INTERPREATION" WAS THAT DECONCINI RESERVATION WAS "A NAKED AND BAREFACED INTERPRETATION OF ARTICLE IV OF THE NEUTRALITY TREATY" WHICH WAS "MORE OFFENSIVE" BUT "DOES NOT DETRACT FROM WHAT IS STATED IN ARTICLE IV". IF PANAMA MADE AN EFFORT--WHICH LOPEZ THOUGHT IT SHOULD-- TO REAFFIRM THE NONINTERVENTION PRINCIPLE IN THE EXCHANGE OF RATIFICATIONS, THIS WOULD PREVAIL OVER DECONCINI BECAUSE IT HAS LEGAL PRECEDENCE". MOREOVER, ATTITUDES IN US HAD CHANGED TO POINT WHERE NEITHER SENATE NOR AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD, PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, PERMIT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTERVENTION ABROAD ANY LONGER.

4. LOPEZ WARNED LOCAL MEDIA ON THE DANGER OF ELABORATING ON POSSIBILITIES OF INTERVENTION OPENED BY DECONCINI, SAYING THIS COULD SERVE AS A PRECEDENT AND "THERE WAS NO REASON TO PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE NORTH AMERICANS".

5. FULL TEXT OF TELEVISION NEWS BROADCAST ITEM DESCRIBING BRIEFING FBIS/PANAMA PA 311330Y.

6. COMMENT: THIS TELEVISION ITEM WAS THE ONLY SUBSTANTIVE MEDIA COVERAG OF LOPEZ' REMARKS; HE ANNOUNCED AT THE OUTSET THAT HE WAS SPEAKING OFF THE RECORD, AND EXCEPT FOR THIS TELEVISION ITEM, MEDIA TOOK HIM AT HIS WORD. ONE MARCH 31 NEWSPAPER PRINTED A PICTURE OF LOPEZ AND THE BARE STATEMENT THAT HE HELD A BRIEFING, BUT FAILED TO REPORT WHAT HE SAID. OTHER NEWSPAPERS HAVE NOT MENTIONED THE BRIEFING AT ALL. WE UNDERSTAND FROM ONE SOURCE WHO WAS PRESENT THAT HE MADE NO OVERT APPEAL TO JOURNALISTS

TO ASSIST GOP IN EXPLAINING THIS SITUATION TO PUBLIC.  
THIS SOURCE DESCRIBED LOPEZ AS SOMEWHAT RELUCTANT  
AND UNRESPONSIVE DURING THE QUESTION PERIOD--HE  
APPARENTLY TOOK SO MANY OF HIS QUESTIONS FROM ONE  
TELEVISION NEWSMAN THAT, SOURCE SAID, IT LOOKED  
LIKE A PUT-UP JOB BETWEEN THEM.

7. WE DO NOT READ THIS BRIEFING AS SIGNIFYING THAT  
THE GOP HAS ADOPTED ANY DEFINED "LINE". RATHER THE  
REVERSE--LOPEZ VERY CAREFULLY DISASSOCIATED HIS PERSONAL  
VIEWS FROM THE YET-UNDEFINED OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POSITION.  
IT PROBABLY INCLUDES SOME HINTS OF WAYS IN WHICH THE  
GOVERNMENT MAY TRY TO DRAW SOME OF THE POISON OUT  
OF DECONCINI.

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